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RECENT THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE

A NEW WORK ON BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY¹

During the last fifty years, since the discovery and decipherment of the monuments of Egypt and Babylonia, many books have been written on the relation of these monuments to the Bible. Most of these are destitute of historical value on account of their dogmatic bias. Some of them are apologetic, and are written with the avowed purpose of proving the inerrancy of the Old Testament and defending the traditional theories of the authorship of its books. Such works argue from the antiquity of writing in Egypt and in Babylonia that Moses must have written the Pentateuch, regardless of the question whether either the Egyptian or the Babylonian script is adapted for the recording of Hebrew literature. They eagerly catch at the statement of Merneptah in regard to Israel, "Its seed is destroyed," as a "confirmation" of the story in Exodus of Pharaoh's killing of the Hebrew children. To this class belong the works of Sayce, Hommel, Urquhart, Kyle, and a host of minor writers. They interest religious people, but they are of little value to scientific investigators. At the other extreme stand the writings of the modern German Pan-Babylonian school. They are convinced that everything good and great in the history of the ancient world has come out of a primitive Babylonian astral *Weltanschauung*. The history of Israel and its religion, the Homeric poems, the Gospels, and primitive Christianity are all modified forms of this ancient astrology. Here belong the treatises of Winckler, Zimmern, Jeremias, Stucken, etc. Between these two extremes it is hard to find many sober, objective presentations of the facts of archaeology in their relation to the Bible. Schrader's *Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament* was a work of this sort before Winckler and Zimmern rewrote it in the interest of Pan-Babylonianism. Roger's *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament* and Jastrow's *Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions* are modern works of a similar scientific character. Unfortunately both of these are limited to Babylonian archaeology, and both aim chiefly to give translations of

¹ *Archaeology and the Bible*. By George A. Barton. Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1916. xiv+461 pages. \$2.00.

texts that are parallel to the Bible. There is great need of a book that shall gather up all the facts of archaeology from all the lands of the ancient Orient, and present these in their historical relation to the statements of the Old Testament.

This need is met in a satisfactory manner by Professor Barton's work. He is an accomplished Sumerian and Babylonian scholar and Orientalist. He is thoroughly trained in scientific methods of research, and he has the faculty of impartial judgment that is necessary in a historian. In this work the facts of oriental archaeology are gathered with the most painstaking thoroughness. No discovery made prior to 1916 that has any bearing on the Bible is omitted. The translations of inscriptions can be trusted as made directly from the original and as representing the last word in linguistic science. Here a mass of information that hitherto has been accessible only in technical journals and reports is spread before the student in convenient form. It is a mine of archaeological and biblical information. On the sides of completeness and of accuracy this book deserves the highest praise.

Only in the matter of method of presentation is it open to unfavorable criticism. In the writing of history two methods are possible, the perpendicular or the horizontal; that is, one may take certain topics, and discuss them in historical fashion from beginning to end; or one may give cross-sections of history, and discuss all the topics in the successive periods. The latter method has come generally to be regarded as the better. In a history of Israel we do not want chapters on Israel's literature, its government, its manners, and its religions, but we need to know what were the literature, the government, the manners, and the religion in each period. In a treatise on the religion of Israel a discussion of the doctrines of God, of man, of sin, etc., in their separate historical development, such as A. B. Davidson gives in his *Theology of the Old Testament*, is found to be less satisfactory than a discussion of all the beliefs of Israel in each successive period of its history. In like manner, the facts of archaeology and of the Bible are most conveniently grouped under periods of the history of the ancient Orient. The destinies of the ancient nations interlocked, so that we do not need separate histories of each of them, but we want to know what was happening the same time in all of them.

Dr. Barton unfortunately has rejected this strictly historical method in favor of a semi-historical, topical method. In the first part he takes up, successively, Egypt, Babylonia and Assyria, the Hittites, and Palestine; and under each head discusses the land and the preservation

of its antiquities, the discovery of the antiquities and their decipherment, the chronology and outline of history, and the discoveries which bear on the Bible. If one wishes to know what was happening in the world in the time of Rameses II, one must consult each of these chapters for the appropriate paragraph. If one wishes to examine the documents which are the sources for the history of this period, one must go to the second part where the ancient documents that confirm or illustrate the Bible are given in translation. It is impossible from this book to gain a clear idea of any particular period of the world's history without considerable labor. Instead of being a history of the ancient Orient in the light of archaeology and of the Bible, it is a collection of monographs on various topics connected with oriental archaeology. To illustrate from the treatment of the Hebrew patriarchs, Abraham is discussed in the chapter on Egypt in connection with the question whether he went to Egypt in the period of Hyksos rule. His purchase of the cave of Machpelah is discussed in chap. iii, on the Hittites. His migration to Canaan is discussed in chap. v, on the archaeological history of Palestine; his sacrifice of Isaac in chap. xii, on high places and temples; while the whole question of his relation to Babylonian archaeology is postponed to the ninth chapter of the second part. The biblical student who wants to know about Abraham and his times will have hard work to gain any clear conceptions. In the same way Jacob and Joseph are mentioned at various points in the history of the several oriental nations and their archaeological connections are not created until Part II, chap. x. This is a serious defect in the work. The author owes it to his reader to classify all the data of archaeology and of the Bible and to assign them to their proper place chronologically so that one may be able to see at a glance all that is known about any given period of history. In the case of the biblical traditions this is often a difficult process; nevertheless it must be attempted if we are to use our facts for historical purposes. Perhaps it is just this difficulty, and the fear of stirring up dogmatic prejudice, that have led the author to adopt the topical rather than the historical method of treatment. It is impossible for the heresy-hunter to find out exactly what he thinks about the meaning and chronological placing of a story of Genesis. In a book published by the Sunday-School Union and intended for Sunday-school teachers and scholars this obscurity may be a virtue. In any case it is different from the trenchant historical criticism of Dr. Barton in previous articles in technical journals.

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